DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 331 155 EA 022 905

AUTHOR Rogers, Martha; Davis, Joan
TITLE Women of Substance.
PUB DATE Mar 91
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of School Administrators (New Orleans, LA, March 1991).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Qualifications; *Administrator Responsibility; *Administrator Role; *Boards of Education; *Educational Administration; Elementary Secondary Education; Equal Opportunities (Jobs); Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Intermediate Administrative Units; Leadership Training; Mentors; Professional Development; Sex Discrimination; Sexual Harassment; *Superintendents; *Women Administrators
IDENTIFIERS *Ontario

ABSTRACT

This paper is organized as a dialogue between two female administrators, the superintendent of program and the superintendent of operations, from the Wellington County Board of Education in southwestern Ontario, Canada. After describing Wellington County and the organizational structure of the school board, the superintendents describe the nature of their positions, including departments and programs for which they are responsible and specific duties they perform. Next, both women explain their early school experiences, their educational and professional goals, and the sequence of events and positions that led them to the superintendency, with mention throughout of instances of sexual harassment and sex discrimination. After reviewing the changing roles and opportunities for women in administration, the presenters discuss the realities of the superintendency and offer suggestions for coping with domestic and professional responsibilities to women aspiring to that position. Last, essential traits of administrators such as political acumen and common sense are examined, the importance of leadership development programs is discussed, and ideas for helping women move into higher level administrative positions in education are presented. (CLA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED331155

WOMEN

OF

SUBSTANCE

A PRESENTATION TO THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Davis
M. Rogers

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

DR. MARTHA ROGERS

DR. JOAN DAVIS

NEW ORLEANS

MARCH 1991

EA 022 905

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Note: This presentation will be given as a dialogue between the two presenters.

WOMEN OF SUBSTANCE

(JOAN) - (MARTHA) Good afternoon.

(JOAN) Martha, I am so pleased to be here today to talk about women in educational leadership. Do you think, before we get into the substance of our presentation that we should introduce ourselves, and set the stage by telling our audience something about where we work?

(MARTHA) Alright - let's do that. That is Joan Davis, and I am Martha Rogers. We work in adjoining offices in the Head Office of the Wellington County Board of Education. Wellington is in south-western Ontario, Canada, and its only large city, Guelph, where our Head Office is situated, is about 75 miles by road from Toronto.

(JOAN) The name Guelph comes from the family name of German royalty of the 19th century by the way.
Our school board area of jurisdiction is a huge county, about 60 miles north to south and 40 miles east to west. Guelph is a university based city and the schools of agriculture and veterinary medicine are world renowned. There are several small towns, villages and hamlets and the good people of Wellington make their

living in everything you can imagine from growing corn to machine tooling, from raising hogs to robotics, from manufacturing water pumps to making beer.

(MARTHA) The actual School Board in Wellington County consists of 17 elected trustees, who serve three year terms. They are paid for this activity by the way. We have close to 25,000 students in 9 high schools and 48 elementary schools. Our buildings range from rural schools of about 100 k to 6 students to composite high schools in the city of over 1500 students. The organisation of the administration of schools in Ontario is rather different from that in the U.S. in that Superintendents, like me and Joan, are not C.E.O.s. We have a Director of Education in that role, who is supported by Superintendents who have specific portfolios. Thus, in Wellington County, we have a Director and eight Superintendents.

(JOAN) There are 4 Superintendents of Schools, whose prime responsibility is to supervise the operation of families of schools - the county is divided into approximate geographic zones for this purpose. Then we have a Superintendent of Business and Finance, one of Human Resources, one of Operations and one of Program. And those last two are me and Martha - I'm Operations, she's Program. All of our 7 colleagues, by the way, are male. It is worthy of note here that Wellington is in the forefront in having 2 of its 9 senior administration female - women are spread thinly in the

ranks in Ontario at the senior levels. But that's for later. I think you could probably give a capsule outline of what a Superintendent of Program does Martha.

(MARTHA) Well, the Superintendent of Program is responsible for all the educational programs for the 25,000 students in our jurisdiction. My staff includes the Curriculum Department, the Special Education Department, the Speech and Language Pathologists, the Psychology Department, the Attendance Counsellors, Outdoor Education, Co-operative Education, and the Measurement and Evaluation Department. Our Special Education legislation includes both those students who would be included in your PL 94-142, as well as the Gifted. The areas of special education identification, placement and program are always at least potentially confrontational, time consuming and costly. The curriculum for students in JK to Grade 12/OAC is under review as the Government of Ontario is in the midst of developing Restructuring Initiatives for the Province. Otherwise, our issues would be similar to yours - addressing the drop-out problem through retention initiatives, improving student literacy, improving relationships with business and industry, and dealing with violence and anti-social behaviour in our schools.

It seems to me that I look after the Programs, the Superintendents of Schools assist Principals and teachers, the roles of the Superintendents of Finance and Human Resources are clear - and that Joan does everything else? Would that be true?

(JOAN) Yes - that's about it - a Superintendent of Operations looks after all the stuff that nobody else looks after - such as transportation - we bus about 11,500 students on 225 routes every day. And Maintenance - all those buildings need care and attention - and Caretaking - and grass needs cutting and snow shovelling - I have all the janitors and the carpenters and the electricians and groundskeepers. Then I have the Planners - who do the enrolment projections and keep eyes on housing starts. And I have Information Services - which ranges from taking care of overhead projectors to installing computer networks and maintaining them - and I am responsible for supervising the design and building of new schools. And I am responsible for school cafeterias - considering applications to attend our schools from people who don't live in the County - and childcare centres in the schools. Diverse is the word and if I exhibit symptoms of schizophrenia, I think I can safely blame my job! A typical day in my week might include trying to settle a grievance among school cleaners, riding a school bus with my Supervisor of Transportation as he does an inspection run, listening to a sales pitch for the very latest in FAX machines or floor polishers, planning the calendar for the next school year, or digging into educational law so that I can answer questions about rights to attend school.

(MARTHA) So you are busy! That's true of the whole organisation these days, and the length of working day for people at our level just keeps on getting longer. I'm not sure that any of us is ever

fully aware of what we are getting into when we get to the superintendent level. Joan, is this how you thought you would spend your days when you first got into education?

(JOAN) Not at all! In fact, I had been in education a long, long time, before I even considered getting into this kind of job. To tell the truth, education isn't my first career - I'm a re-tread. Though I have to admit that, from as far back as I can remember, I wanted to be a teacher. As a little kid, playing teacher was my favourite game - even before I went to school. Maybe because, back when I was kindergarten age, they cancelled kindergarten and I couldn't go to school - so the whole thing took on an air of excitement for me as a child.

(MARTHA) What do you mean - they cancelled kindergarten? Who cancelled kindergarten?

(JOAN) The Government did. There was a war on you see - World War 2 actually - so one of the austerity measures was to cancel kindergarten, which, back then in Britain, started children into school at 4 years old. I had to wait until I was five and you have no idea how much I wanted to go to school! It's a long time ago, but it seems like yesterday, that I finally could go to school - with my gas mask strung across my shoulder. And I loved it - I loved school and everything about it, and all I wanted from the

world was to grow up to be a teacher. What about you, did you always want to be a teacher?

(MARTHA) No. As a child it never occurred to me that I would be a teacher. I wanted to be, at different times, a hairdresser, a policeman, and, by the time I left school, a psychologist. If you wanted to be a teacher, why did you start out by working right away?

(JOAN) That's both complex and simple. To be a teacher, I had to go to University. It wasn't that I wasn't smart enough - I was a bright kid, no doubt about that. But back then, being a bright girl wasn't any good if your interest was in Math and Science. To get to university on a bursary - and that was the only way I could possibly have gone straight from school -I had to have Latin plus a modern language. Never mind 90% in Math - learn your amo, amas, amant and your je suis, tu et, ils sont, and welcome to university, child from a working class background.

Looking back, I probably could have done it in languages and arts - had I been prepared to put my mind to it - but I didn't want to! I wanted physics and math and all those fascinating things girls weren't supposed to be good at! So I quit high school on the first possible day and went off to work. So I have very mixed memories of my school days - joy at learning when I was a little kid - frustration later when I was stopped from learning what I wanted to learn and was directed toward a mould into which I did not

believe I fitted. By the time I was 16, I had given up on my dream of being a teacher because it was an impossible idea. So what happened to you as you went through school Martha?

(MARTHA) Nothing too amazing. I was accelerated (skipped) twice and ended up in high school at a fairly early age. I did reasonably well, participated in the usual co-curricular activities, worked as a lifeguard, went to parties, changed boyfriends and otherwise did typical teenage kid stuff. What did you do right after high school?

(JOAN) I got a job - several in fact in a fairly short period of time - my first was as a clerk in the local city hall and I worked with invoices in Accounts Payable - for the princely sum of 125 pounds a year - in those days that was worth about $500. Then I got a job in a Bank. Prestigious, back then. Women did not work at the counter serving customers - all the tellers in British banks in the 50s were men - what a strange idea that is now don't you think? The women worked in the back - out of sight of the public - I was good with figures and decided that being the first female bank manager was probably a good ambition! So I was good at my job and I worked hard. And I took courses at night school - to a point I mastered typing but shorthand totally defeated me! But then, I met this fellow, and fell in love. And we decided to get married. A perfectly normal thing for young people to do then as now! And

the bank fired me because of it.

(MARTHA) Oh, come on Joan, there had to be some other reasons! You can tell the truth about it you know - what was the REAL reason you got fired?

(JOAN) Honest truth - I got fired because I got married! Married women were not permitted to work in banks. And, I suspect, in a lot of other places too, though I only know about banks.

(MARTHA) Well, I have never come across anything like that! Anyway, this has nothing to do with being a superintendent. How did you get into teaching?

(JOAN) By accident - like most things in life. Actually, because my husband decided to take engineering courses at night school, I went with him - and did well - and got offered an apprenticeship in the local shipyard as a draftswoman - years later I discovered that apprentice draftswomen got paid a lot less than apprentice draftsmen - but at the time I knew no better. And from there I went on into engineering design and engineering courses at night school. By the time we came to Canada in 1964, I was a qualified engineering designer with some good experience in the British ship building industry, in a University lab setting, and with an electrical utility. But it was really tough getting a job - it took more than a week anyway! - because the responses I got to my

enquiries came back as variations of : "We had a woman once and she wasn't any good, so we aren't hiring another" or "The boys in the drafting room don't always use good language so we couldn't restrict them by hiring a woman". But I did get hired and went to work for Atomic Energy of Canada on bits and pieces of nuclear generating stations. Almost by accident, I turned up at the local school board offices to ask how one got into teaching drafting - just as they were looking for a drafting teacher - and so I got started on a career in education.

(MARTHA) It was different for me - I went straight to University after high school . While I was in University, I did an honours degree in psychology. Until my fourth year, I intended to do a Ph.D. in psychology, unfortunately, my thesis advisor in the fourth year, spent more time chasing me around the lab than advising me about my future! I was so turned off psychology and psych professors by this that I changed directions. I really was sexually harassed - and I had no idea what to do about it. I was young - and though it didn't destroy me, it certainly affected me and I decided to go into business instead. I spent the next several years working for a management consulting firm on commission. Actually, I was a head hunter and I sold people to my clients! I worked all year and saved enough to travel every summer. Next, I quit and decided to be a stockbroker. I joined an insurance company in the securities department as a clerk - the job was dull and when I announced that I was going to take the

Canadian Securities course, in order to be a trader, the manager told me that he thought it would make me a better clerk. This did not improve my attitude toward my company . Next, I decided to help some of my fellow female clerks (mostly immigrants), who were underpaid, by getting them new jobs through my previous contacts. And I also decided to lighten up my supervisor - my friend who was also a clerk and I, pulled pranks constantly. After she quit, I was fired. Interestingly, she is now a senior Counsel for the Law Society of Ontario in the department which investigates situations where lawyers may need to be disciplined - there is some irony in that turn of events.

(JOAN) Well, we have getting fired in common anyway!

(MARTHA) I had to do something - so I went to teachers' college. I decided I would be a Primary teacher because, in order to get into the primary course, you needed a degree - which you didn't need in order to take the course for Grades 1 through 8. I thought the course would be more challenging. I got a job right out of college and went to teach a Grade 1 class. I taught grade 1 for a couple of years and was asked to teach a Special Education class. During this time, I met the Superintendent of Special Education, who turned out to be a very positive influence in my life.

(JOAN) A mentor perhaps?

(MARTHA) In some ways - I didn't spend as much time learning from him as with some others. But one very important thing he told me was that, if I wished to be promoted, I needed more education. At this point, I went back to school, and took the whole matter of my job and education very seriously for the first time. I was teaching during the day, and did a Master's degree in the evenings - in curriculum. I was working hard. On the weekends, I ran a swimming pool, and saw my husband in my spare time - what there was of it. It did not help that relationship, which eventually ended in divorce several years ago.

(JOAN) I too, went back to school. But I had to start with a Bachelor's degree - so I was teaching drafting in high school during the day, and going to University at night. Interestingly enough, my first degree was also in Psychology - for the simple reason that I wanted a Bachelor of Science - and the only night school program I could do to get that was in psychology. My Masters came later - I think the night school stuff gets to be a habit - but mine is in Educational Administration. I also had a husband - and a child by this time - and I learned the joys of a cleaning lady and a microwave oven during those years. And I just kept on going to night school and taking correspondence courses until I ended up with an Ed.D. in Educational Administration.

(MARTHA) After five years as a teacher, I too hired a cleaning

lady and went back to school full time to do my doctorate in Special Education. Then it was back to my school board and into a Grade 2 classroom. A year later I decided that I had better actively seek promotion outside my own school board, because it didn't appear that my path was going to be what I wanted if I didn't move. The situation wasn't helped by the fact that I had to sometimes hide in the ladies room to avoid the amorous, and unwelcome, attentions of my principal. Again, harassment.

By this time, I knew I wanted to be a Superintendent in either Special Education or Curriculum. So I moved to a consultancy with another Board - in Curriculum. And here I met the Superintendent of Program whose guidance, support and direction had a profound influence on the next five years of my life. He asked me what I wanted to do "when I grew up" and I said I wanted to be a Superintendent of Program. We agreed that I would spend the first year doing my job as a consultant - learning as I went along - that I would pass my Supervisory Officer's papers in the second year, while I continued to do my job well, and that, in the third year, he and the Director, would ensure that I at least got interviewed for a Supervisory officer's job.

(JOAN) Just so we are clear - Supervisory Officer is the legalistic term for Superintendent - and in Ontario, to be a Supervisory Officer means you have to get qualifications which come as the result of written and oral examinations. A tough process.

(MARTHA) I did a good job - at the end of the 3rd year, with thanks to the Superintendent and Director, I was interviewed by the Ministry of Education. I was hired as an Education Officer in Special Education and worked for the Government for one and a half years. From there, I was hired as Superintendent of Special Education in Wellington - that was in January 1987.

(JOAN) Congratulations - and you are now Superintendent of Program with us because Special Education and Curriculum were rolled into one portfolio a year ago in a re-organisation of the administration of the Board. As for me, I changed school boards when it became obvious that I was not going to get a principalship in my home board - for a whole variety of reasons not the least of which was, and still is, a real reluctance in that Board to hire women as secondary principals. Another was my total disinterest in any senior administrator's sexual advances. So I moved to Wellington into a principal's job - and a year ago into the Superintendency. And, like you, into a portfolio which was created by combining two - Administration and Property - into Operations.

(MARTHA) So we both got fired, and we both got chased around the desk by school or senior administrators. And here we are. Is there a person in your background who gets credit - like my superintendent?

(JOAN) Yes - also a superintendent - perhaps the most critical role of all superintendents is to support, to mentor others who are trying to move up the ladder. I had a superintendent who really made me believe I could get there - he trusted me, assigned tasks far above my level, supported, encouraged - and made me believe in me.

(MARTHA) I would really like to talk about the realities of life at work and at home for women in senior administration.

(JOAN) I agree. These are tough jobs and they do give one cause to stop and think.

(MARTHA) For one thing, there are going to be more women in senior administration. In Ontario, we have an affirmative action target to have 50% females in all positions of responsibility by the year 2000. Boards have to work toward this - and appear to be actively seeking women at the superintendent level. Certainly, there are opportunities and will be more women in the jobs - and more women will be in different roles. Traditionally, women have been left out of the central office senior roles of Program, Operation and Human Resources - I see them moving into those positions and you and I are examples of that. I see the workload increasing - over my four years as a superintendent it certainly has, and the reality is that many superintendents work every day and every night during

the week. I work from 7.30am to at least 10pm most days and I know you, and our colleagues, do also. Weekends are not exempt - often such things as interviewing happen on Saturdays.

(JOAN) It is really important, for anyone, but particularly women, who aspire to superintendencies, to reflect carefully on personal priorities. If you have husbands and/or children you had better make such a career decision as a family if you intend to stay together. I might add, at this point, that I believe that a disproportionate number of women superintendents are single or recycling. My theory is that there are NOT hordes of independent, self-confident, successful, busy men who, if given a choice, would choose to live with a person who is seldom there. Other factors that might come in are the fact that many male egos have problems dealing with women in power positions, whose earning power exceeds theirs, and whose job tends to encourage in them the aggressive, the confident and perhaps even the abrasive. And, if you aspire to the superintendent's chair, for your own mental health, you have to come to an understanding about the HOUSEWORK. The understanding cannot be that you and your liberated husband will each do 50%. The understanding has to be that from Monday morning to Friday after work, YOU will do NONE of it. For $125 a month, you can hire a cleaning service and so - you have taken responsibility for cleaning. You can buy a freezer and buy enough food for a month or 2, for other people to cook while you are in the Board Room, and you can buy underwear and socks in bulk so that laundry can

wait until the weekends and you don't have to shop for months at a time. And, on a superintendent's salary, you are unlikely to go bankrupt if you send shirts and blouses to the cleaners - and they know where they keep the iron.

(MARTHA) So that's half the job. The washing, ironing, vacuuming, dusting and shopping, you have successfully delegated to paid help in some form - just like you do so well at work. The menfolk and the children can deal with the dishes - a dishwasher doesn't take much skill - and they can take out the garbage, and cut the lawn - or hire a landscaper - but that's their half for them to get concerned about. As long as you work out all these details in advance, I believe that a regular, ordinary woman can succeed at work and at home. I do not believe for one instant that I need to be superwoman. The simple exercising of the same organizational skills at home that work during the day should do it.

(JOAN) We have been talking about the homefront and domestic politics - what about in the Boardroom and the politics of the job?

(MARTHA) We have to be politically astute. In fact, I see the 2 most critical traits necessary for the superintendent of the 90s as political acumen and common sense. Those transcend any ideas of visionary skills and are not gender-related. I suspect that, certainly in Canada, and likely in the States, the trustees and media are doing their best to gain control of Boards of Education.

There is a great need for superintendents to be good guardians of the best of our school systems, and proponents of change which is soundly based in educational research - and to protect schools and children from take-over by interest groups of all types whose agendae are not in the best interest of children.

(JOAN) How does all that affect women then?

(MARTHA) I can tell you frankly, that I have found a number of the women who have come to me for career counselling to be incredibly naive in relation to the politics of education. They have not internalized the fact that they are aspiring to be senior executives in a multi-million dollar corporation. For those aspiring to the superintendency role, there is a great deal to be learned from Mary Cunningham's remarks about her rise and fall at Bendix and her subsequent marriage to her mentor, Bill Agree. She attempted to describe objectively the mistakes she made, concluding:

"Part of the problem, I think, is that women aren't taught the things they need in the business world. We are taught about virtue, not about power; about goodness, not about strength. The role models we have grown up with - saints and heroines of the 19th century novels - are concerned almost exclusively with doing good. In the end, they triumph but usually in a spiritual or emotional sense. I am not sure that even the Blessed Mother would have gotten very far at Bendix. Men seem intuitively to take a more

practical approach. Many care about being good, but they also want to get the job done. And, they don't view defeat as anything glorious no matter how noble the cause. I'm not sure one would want to trade pragmatism for virtue, but a harmonious blend might do some good."

(JOAN) I agree. Superintendents need some street smarts. And defeat is defeat is defeat - never mind playing the game. Are we putting people off the job? I hope not - because there is nothing gender related about the traits necessary for success - socialization yes - gender no. All this stuff can be learned - the best way is through and from people already successful in the roles. But where do professional development - or college courses come into the scene?

(MARTHA) I think that leadership development programs of all types must be increasingly important to us. We need to market the value of school and senior administration. Through our leadership programs, activities, coaching, and mentoring, we need to hook promising young women on the joys of administration.

(JOAN) And we need to teach prospective school leaders about ordering procedures, staffing, school organisation, management systems, staff supervision, public speaking, and all of the skills needed to succeed in senior management. And we must see that women get these lessons too. Our jobs are difficult, but possible.

They are hectic but fulfilling. Most of all these are relevant jobs that do make a difference to the lives of children.

(MARTHA) Perhaps we could give a few ideas on how to help women get ahead in any school district - for example, setting up ways to help women design their career paths; offering local internship programs and job-shadowing; providing workshops on resume writing and interview skills; offering a formal mentoring program; arranging for qualification and training courses to be held locally and at various times during the year; encouraging cross-department transfers and job rotation; offering financial assistance for leadership training courses; establishing support groups for women.

(JOAN) In Strategies for Women at Work, Janice LaRouche said: " .. finding the right strategic move has to do with understanding the workplace; using the solution has to do with understanding yourself." To be an effective superintendent, you MUST understand yourself first. I trust that we have provided a few pointers for you toward that, and to understanding the workplace. Thank you.